



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Milwaukee County

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Milwaukee County Negotiating to Improve Transit System

MILWAUKEE – The Milwaukee County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is negotiating with MV Transportation, Inc. to take over the management of the Milwaukee County transit system. The following questions and answers clarify the way forward as we move towards this management change:

Q: Is this a move to privatize Milwaukee County Transit?

A: Our transit system is currently privatized and has never been run by Milwaukee County directly. The current private provider, MCTS, has managed the system since 1975. All the management and staff of MCTS are private, non-County employees. The County will continue to own the buses and infrastructure, and set the fares and routes. This move is being made to ensure the transit system and riders are getting the most out of our transit funding.

Q: Will this new company raise fares and cut routes?

A: No. This company will not assume power on these matters; the only people who can make decisions on routes and fares are the County Board and County Executive.

County Executive Abele has refused to raise fares in two tight budgets and remains committed to a strong transit system. He led a group of civic and business leaders this year to successfully lobby the state for more funding and helped the County get federal money for new rapid transit routes.

Q: What is the goal of bringing in a new company?

A: County Executive Abele is looking to get the most value, accountability and service for taxpayers, riders and the public. In the past decade, transit has seen fares increase and routes cut. Putting the management out to bid does not commit us to any specific provider, but it allows us to ensure that transit service is sustainable for decades to come.

Since taking office in 2011, County Executive Abele has heard numerous times from County Board Supervisors, transit drivers and riders that they are unhappy with MCTS and the service they provide. Putting this contract out to bid allows us to respond to these concerns by ensuring we are working with a partner that shares our dedication to the Milwaukee transit system.

Q: Who made this decision?

A: In order to make sure politics and outside pressures did not play a role in the decision, the MCDOT selected a panel of professionals who scored all the bids based on the cost, service levels and other important criteria to ensure the awardee would provide the best value to riders and taxpayers.

County Executive Abele has worked hard over the last two years to professionalize all procurement and contract decisions and to ensure that they are insulated from the influence of politics and lobbyists and guided instead by what is in the best interests of the citizens we serve.

Q: Does this mean all of the bus drivers and employees are losing their jobs?

A: No. The County continues to recognize the important contribution these employees make to our transit system. Accordingly, MV Transportation, Inc. has assured the County and said publicly they plan to give preference to current employees, as well as honor all existing union contracts.

Q: What is the difference between a non-profit or other type of company running the system?

A: The focus of this bidding process is to find a partner committed to efficient and affordable service, and opportunities for improvement. National firms may be able to provide greater efficiencies by learning from their experience and refining business practices and lessons learned from other systems. Savings achieved in these areas allow more dollars to be used to sustain transit services. The County's interest is in ensuring that taxpayers' and riders money is well spent on an efficient and effective system.

Q: Why didn't I hear about this before a decision was made?

A: The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel published numerous stories on the County putting the Transit contract out to bid. The Request for Proposal (RFP) was posted online and the County Board received a report and briefing in April.

Q: What are the next steps?

A: The County is currently negotiating with MV Transportation, Inc. The goal is to reach an agreement in time for the County Board to consider the deal and approve it in September.